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There Is Such a Thing as Modernism

"MODERNISM", it is sometimes argued, is a rather curious and perhaps misleading name for the ideology of perversion and anti-traditionalism which rules the contemporary world. After all, every sensibility must have been "modern" in its time, and if, as many of us believe, the day of modernism is drawing to a close, surely it will soon cease to be "modern" and it may well be that some form of traditionalism will be the most modern ideology. Could we still call anti-traditionalism "modernism" under those circumstances? Should we call the *passé* notions which already seem to belong more to the second and third quarters of the 20th century than to the future "modernism" even now?

In our view the answer to these questions is yes. "Modernism" does not simply mean "what happens to be current at the present time". It is something rather different from and rather deeper than that. It is an attitude toward currency and time; one that is so ingrained in the present world-outlook that many people assume that it has been held by all people at all times. In fact, it is an attitude which we first find in the 16th century, and then only as something of a rarity. C.S. Lewis, in his monumental *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, writes of Spenser's contemporary, Gabriel Harvey:

He was almost like a modern, concerned with period, with being contemporary, anxious to follow the change of the times. He proclaims in 1595 that 'the date of idle vanities is expired' and a new age of Spartan austerity about to begin. Much earlier he had announced that the great period of 'tunes and eloquence' was coming to an end, and philosophy in 'diuers morall [and] naturall matters' would soon have all the credit. He is thus to be classed with Willes as a very early example of that historical attitude towards the present which has since become so common.

This is what we mean by modernism. A modernist is not simply one who holds the ideology current in his time, but one who believes that it is right *because* it is current in his time. One who believes that the present and the future have a special quality of rightness in and of themselves: that "later" equals "better" or "truer"; that "new" equals "right" or "good".

The other example of this attitude in the late 16th century is provided by Richard Willes, another very minor figure, of whom Lewis writes:

His most interesting production is, however, his introduction to the *History of Travel*, for here, to the best of my knowledge, we first meet that type of advertisement, since so common, which may be called chronological intimidation. Willes would have us buy his book because geography is the science of the future, because we are entering upon the geographical age. 'There was a time when the arte of grammar was so much esteemed. . . . Than it was honourable to be a poet . . . that tyme is paste. There was a tyme when logicke and Astrology so weered the heads of young schollers . . . that tyme is paste. Not long since happy was he that had any skil in the Greke language.' But we have changed all that, and now 'all Christians, Iewes, Turkes, Morres, Infidels and Barbares be this day in loue with Geographie'.

Today it is considered so natural that a man should believe an idea or espouse an ideology because it is "the coming thing" or "the latest idea", and reject another because it is "out of date", that most people assume it has always been so, and that all ages were "modern" in their own eyes and justified themselves in the same ways that modern people justify themselves. But they did not. In what must be one of the most exhaustive studies of the literature of the 17th century, covering almost every writer of the smallest note, Lewis finds only two adherents of the doctrine of modernism, both from the last quarter of the century. It was only very gradually, in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries that this attitude became widespread and ultimately predominant.

The early Protestants did not justify their revolt against the Catholic Church by suggesting that they were establishing a "religion for our time" or a faith "adapted to the needs of the present day" as modern pseudo-Christians do. On the contrary, their whole justification was that they claimed to be returning to the *original* and *pristine* form of the faith. They were not "the next step in Christian evolution" nor campaigners for "change" or "progress", but rebels against the changes which they believed to have taken place in the church, which, being a "progress" away from the original pur-

ity of the Christian revelation could only be a degeneration. Even the most radical of Protestants—especially the most radical—would have fiercely argued that any “change” applied to original Christianity could only be a change for the worse; that far from “adapting the faith to the times”, he was opposing and undoing such adaptations. This, of course, did not mean that his Catholic opponent was in favour of “adaptation to the times”. On the contrary, his justification was that he was the preserver of the tradition handed down from the beginning. They were agreed upon one thing: upon the legitimacy of the ancient and the illegitimacy of the new. Each accused the other of innovation. Both agreed that whoever should be proved “modern” would, *ipso facto*, be proved wrong.

Even in the 18th century, the term “revolution” meant (as it should mean) literally a “turning back”. It was justified not on the grounds of building a “brave new world”, but of returning civilisation to its pristine purity.

Gradually the doctrine of modernism was accepted. Perhaps its purest expression was in the form of Marxism. Marx argued that there were no such things as absolute or objective values. All ethics and morality were merely devices serving the ends of the ruling class. There was no such thing as right or wrong. How, then could one justify one's own cause? How could one say that socialism was right and capitalism wrong? Marx's solution was classic modernism. Socialism was historically inevitable. It was the coming thing, therefore it was right. The only criterion of right and wrong was position in time: “later” equals “better”; “new” equals “right”. That is the sum total of Marxist ethics, and the perfect statement of pure modernism.

The same idea has dominated the modern world for the past century and a half, though usually in more vague, diluted, sentimentalised and illogical variants.

From the foregoing it should be apparent that there is a doctrine of modernism. It is not simply “what happens to be modern at any given time”. It is a dogma which began life in the 16th century and reached its fullest flowering in the 19th; in its purest form, that of Marxism, it seemed for some time to be about to inherit the earth; but Marxism is now dying and modernism has passed its high noon.

Anti-modernism is essentially the doctrine that truth is not relative and determined by the fluctuating events of history, but that right is right and wrong is wrong regardless of what happens or who wins; that beauty and goodness are always beauty and goodness; that

truth is not subject to the historical process. As Yeats said in response to the Hegelian theory of history (upon which Marx based his dialectic) “I do not think the spring vegetables refuted when over”.

An anti-modernist is almost certainly what may be termed a *traditionalist*, because if one believes that there are objective values which can be known, then one almost certainly believes that they have been known and that following the ways laid down by those who have known and taught them in the past—whether CHRIST, Socrates or Confucius—is the correct course. He will also believe that the accumulated wisdom of civilisation is not a thing to be discarded in favour of the latest scheme or notion. Of course, change is part of life and no period is quite like any other, but the anti-modernist believes in constructing a future in line with the principles of tradition; not necessarily one modelled upon all the externals of past ages, nor one which rejects all the benefits of later ages, but one which does not lose sight of the fundamentals of our moral, aesthetic and cultural heritage.

The very fate of the word “modern” is an indicator of the progress of modernism. In Shakespeare's time, it meant “vulgar or trivial”; something which has mushroomed in the present and has no venerability or antiquity behind it. In the 20th century it was almost always a term of approbation. There is no reason that we should not now use the term “modern” in Shakespeare's sense. Indeed, to use it in the 20th-century sense is a sign of modernism.

We suspect that the doctrine of modernism will continue to be called “modernism” long after it has ceased to be modern. Textbooks may one day refer to “the notion of ‘modernism’ which flourished 200 years ago”. For modernism has nothing to do with being modern (in the sense of “contemporary”); it is a philosophy of life.

What is true is that modernism depends for its very sustenance upon being contemporary. Like the dictator whose only justification is that “might is right”, once it is out of power, it has no claim whatever. The sole justification of modernism is that it is new, that it is the coming thing. When traditionalism is out of fashion it can at least take solace in the fact that it is right. But when modernism is no longer modern, it is finished. Unlike the spring vegetables, and unlike any other doctrine, it is refuted when over.

MALAYA, NOT MALAYSIA
INSIST ON IMPERIAL

Unecdotes of Innocence

Leaves From The Minutes
of a Superior Society

MADAM, Having read with approval the preceding Issues of yr. illustrious Publication, & having found therein a worthy Store of sound Opinion & innocent Amusement, I feel that it wd. be not at all unlikely that the humble Production of my inexperienced Pen might be consider'd fitting for the Perusal and Edification of yr. gentle Readers. Accordingly, I have transcribed a series of Notes taken from a Meeting of a certain Gentlemen's Superior Society, when a certain Matter wh. I know to be of Interest to yr. learned Readers was discuss'd after Dinner by the Members. As a noble Aloofness is the Custom of our Society, & as the young Gentlemen present do not wish their Identities to be known to a Readership as discerning as yr. own, I have arranged the Remarks as a series of Aphorisms, the wh. it is in any case easier to follow, there being little logical sequence to the Argument. Much as I would like to tell you more about our esteem'd Society, the cultured and dignified young Gentlemen regard with Disfavour the Man who betrays their Secrets, & lest I find myself lying in a Country Ditch at Sunrise with the Word “Traitor” branded upon my Fore-arm, I fear I must forbear. Hoping that these modest Endeavours may have at the least crawl'd humbly near to yr. lofty Standards of Perfection, I remain, Madam,

Respectfully yours, ‘Ponocrates’

The question which began our discussion, after a lengthy lament on the decline of contemporary civilisation, was this—“What is the worst thing about modern people? Is it possible to identify one particular vice which infects the whole present age like a cancerous growth, and is responsible for all its other vices?” A certain young gentleman, perceiving (while lighting his pipe) that his colleagues were reticent in their pursuit of intellectual truth, settled himself in his chair, and began as follows:—The worst thing about modern people is that they are not real people at all. They are not real people because they are not Innocent. To lose one's Innocence is to forfeit one's place in life. Innocence is the bedrock of human existence, the indispensable quality which allows us to live, and consequently it is extremely difficult to describe. It is useless to

describe it to those who do not possess it, and superfluous to explain it to those who do. Loss of Innocence is the worst thing that can happen to a man. It is the most grievous charge we can bring against him—it makes him worse than a thief or a murderer, because at least the latter, as long as they remain Innocent, retain their place in the general tapestry of humanity. Even about the bloodthirstiest highwayman or brigand there is something safe and consistent. If one ever met Dick Turpin, one would know how to react to him, one could hold oneself in a symbolic relation towards him: if one were a dashing young cavalier, one would take a musket and teach the scoundrel a lesson; if one were a venerable and respected gentleman of mature age, one would take steps to ensure the sober precepts of the law were brought against him; if one were a delicate young lady, one would pray for courage or perhaps scream and fall into a fainting fit; if one were a fellow outlaw one would forge a pact and then perhaps double-cross him, and so on; but throughout all this Dick Turpin himself would remain authentic and consistent. He would be no one else but Dick Turpin. There is no danger that he would suddenly offer to shake hands and say that his highway robbery was only a joke in which he never believed. With such a man you might have to be wary in case he shot you in the back, but you could be sure at least that he would always be a genuine human being, in harmony with the rest of humanity. But with a modern person you do not know where you are. There is nothing purposeful or deliberate about any of his actions. One does not know whether his words are serious or whether one should adopt a humorous manner towards him, whether one is expected to shake hands with him or give him a black eye. If Dick Turpin robs a Stagecoach, one can be sure that he wants to rob the Stagecoach and nothing more. With a modern person it might be a joke in fancy-dress, or a “protest against the universe”, or anything else. He is a ghost, a shadow. His soul has shrunk to a tiny point of light amidst acres of suffocating darkness. Great happiness and great misery are alike forbidden to him—he cannot be said to live at all. That is why if one dressed him in proper clothes and taught him proper behaviour, there would still be something missing. It is not our actions which are important, but the spirit behind them. The whole pivot of the modern age is awry, and that is why it will be so difficult to amend, because the problem is much subtler than merely one of incorrect be-

haviour. The problem is loss of Innocence.

But what is Innocence?

As Dr. Johnson remarked of poetry:—"It is easier to say what it is not." The opposite of Innocence we shall call, for the sake of reference, Cynicism. Cynicism is the true spirit of Satan, and the present age is without doubt given over for a large part to the devil. For it is a mistake to think that the devil is majestic and awe-inspiring, as he is portrayed in popular legend—rather he is small and petty and pusillanimous. His arsenal is mockery and irreverence, scoffing and negation, attempting to steal the life and beauty from all things, sneering at anything better than himself. He cannot himself create anything—he can only distort what has been created by Heaven. In fact the original meaning of the word *diabolos* is apparently something like 'mud-slinger'. It is easy to see how the present age is, by this criterion, truly "diabolical".

But who will define Innocence?

Innocence is the possession of a secret in-dominable chamber in the depths of one's soul, to which no one else has access, and to which one can retire if attacked by the vulgarity of the world, knowing that in this room there is enough strength and security to defeat any outward foes. For what can harm us, if we have an inextinguishable bonfire to warm us no matter what Arctic storms are hurling themselves against the windows? How can we be overthrown, if at the slightest hint of trouble we can withdraw into ourselves like a tortoise, and there live in entire self-sufficiency?

Innocence is a good-natured respectful readiness to encounter goodness wherever it may be found in the world. It is continually looking out for beauty and adventure and excitement, even in places one would not expect to find them. The Cynic has a closed, suspicious, sneering determination not to be caught out admiring anything. He keeps the doors of his soul tightly bolted, and even were an Angel to knock he would refuse to admit her unless she could be distorted to fit into his favourite philosophical system. He looks for the worst in whatever he meets, so that he may drag it down to his own level. The saying, "There's bound to be a perfectly simple explanation for it," means in fact "I refuse to accept anything which is above my understanding". Innocence, ever intent on self-improvement, is delighted to find anything better than itself. It looks for the best in everything, for a quality which it

did not formerly possess and which it may now acquire. It is always ready to assume that a thing is good unless proven otherwise.

Innocence is able to treat everything seriously and on its own terms. The modern world, which takes pride in its promotion of tolerance, is the most enclosed age in history, because it cannot comprehend the possibility that anything outside it may be true. Anything unusual is met with mockery, like children laughing at the attire of an Arabian prince. Anything with a sense of dignity, which is in earnest and does not present itself as a joke is reviled with bad-tempered bitterness. We have heard the Pre-Raphaelite painters derided by a modern commentator because they "took themselves so seriously," because their productions are often over-stylised and yet are not intended in irony. Indeed, many paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites are considerably far from being great works of art—and yet their very earnestness is in itself a saving grace, for it shows that they were aiming at a point of perfection far beyond the limits of their craft, and if they did not reach it, at least they achieved a faint reflection of it. "In the long run," wrote Thoreau, "men hit only what they aim at. Therefore tho' they should fail immediately, they had better aim at something high." But to restrict one's labour to the production of irony is to slink out of the race before it begins, to admit that one is not great enough for a high achievement, and that all one can do is mock the achievements of others. The Cynic enjoys knocking things over but has an ideological prejudice against building anything of his own.

What does our age hate most of all? Enthusiasm, eagerness, earnestness, energy, ardour. What is its principle of wisdom? To be disillusioned with everything, to perceive it all as worthless. And not that alone—to see life as worthless and yet to be conscious that it might be improved is a sign of discernment. To see life as worthless and yet to feel a satisfaction that it should be so is a sign of stupidity and spitefulness. Innocence is always aware of the infinite possibility of life. There will always be something else; the last word can never be said; however much we elaborate our theories and systems there will always be something forgotten, which will turn out to be the most essential thing. It was said of that archetypal romantic idealist, Gatsby, that he had "an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness... some heightened sensitivity to the

promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away." Just when we think we have seen everything in life, there appears something entirely different, the last thing we would have expected. This is why Cynicism is fond of "explaining away", because anything extraordinary or mysterious upsets the greyneyness of its vision, and must be brought to earth with its deadly weapons, mockery and doubt. It is easy to laugh at something, because we can close ourselves to any worth it may contain. It is harder to treat it seriously, to admit that we do not hold the end of wisdom in ourselves and that there are other good things in the world we have not yet seen.

"Reality" is a trusted armament of the Cynic, for it allows him to dispose of whatever is too interesting or unusual by denying that it exists. Like Alice, Innocence is "ready to accept the wildest impossibilities with all that utter trust that only dreamers know".

Innocence is open, expansive, dashing, flamboyant, colourful, confident. Cynicism is small, dull, petty, sneering, suspicious, bad-tempered, monotonous, resentful.

Cynicism is bored by everything. Innocence is amused even by boring people. (The height of wisdom is never to be bored.)

How tedious to be the same person for the whole of one's life! How dull to see time and space as fixed limits we cannot alter, to accept the world as boring chance has arranged it! The Cynic is too concerned with "finding himself" to realise that the only way to live is to throw oneself away. Truly to enjoy life one must absent oneself from considerations of success or failure, from the wish to gain advantage from anything. All pleasure is disinterested—that is why most schoolchildren enjoy reading only those books on which they will not have to sit an examination. An irritable worry about results or outcomes weaves a mist around one's sensitivity to the world. A Cynic is unable to enjoy a thing properly because he cannot give himself up and enjoy anything outside himself—devotion and wonder, which require a temporary surrender of one's self-will, are impossible to him. "Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful," as Emerson said, "we must carry it with us or we find it not." Such a loss of Innocence prevents us from taking a spontaneous enjoyment in life. The world becomes a

cold, nihilistic place where nothing may be done for its own sake—everything must have a reason, it must have a "point" to it. This is truly the age of Cynicism—every moment of life and every aspect of human experience is studied and measured and labelled and compared and classified—every heroic endeavour is smothered under the glare of a thousand microscopes. Who is nearer to the secret pulse of life, the scientist who climbs a mountain in order to study "patterns of human behaviour at high altitude levels", or the true Mountaineer who climbs it because it is there? This is the Age of Reasons. However, if there is a practical reason to do something, there is also a practical reason not to do it. Modern man has become cold and lifeless. He is suspicious of the faintest enthusiasm or unreasoning enjoyment (that is, which does not have a reason behind it). Who can wonder at the unearthly beauty of twilight if he can drown his soul in the fluorescent garishness of a television machine? Who could be amazed at a shower of rain or perceive the mystical beauty behind a gust of wind if he knows that they are being measured to the inch by gabbling men in white coats?

Cynicism hates flamboyance, decoration, colour, flair, polish, because it is suspicious of anything which it cannot fix in a system. The contemporary world is somnambulating. It has lost all confidence in paradisiacal dreams and fantastic ideals. Let us restrict our efforts to the lowest plain of life, it croaks, anything else is dangerous. But what we have called Innocence loves ornament and polish, because to beautify something which did not require it, to make something lovely which might just as well have been plain, is one of the noblest endeavours of mankind. This applies just as much to polish of the mind. A man deserves praise if he masters the Hungarian language because he requires it for his business—how much more admirable is a man who learns Hungarian because he wants a change from speaking English all the time!

The world today is drowned in a sea of trivia. We cannot go to fight with giants if dwarfs keep unlacing our boots. How many battles would Alexander have won, had he been worrying about the result of the 3:20 at Doncaster?

Even the vices of modern people are petty and squalid. They are done for the most everyday motives; there is no sense of horror or grandeur behind them. There are no Shylocks or Tartuffes in the modern world, and that is

why there is no Orestes or Hamlet either.

Cynicism scrutinises everything; it surrounds the whole of life in a fog of explanation and analysis—and while, like Descartes, it is refusing to believe anything it has not discovered for itself, Life herself flies out and disappears, fluttering her wings scornfully at the doubter who could not accept her beauty until he had understood it.

Other ages built empires, founded civilisations, created worlds of dazzling colour and brilliance for their grandchildren to marvel at. The present age writes about it. Can you imagine a wireless commentary on the battle of Hector and Achilles in the dust before the sun-drenched walls of Troy, or a newspaper interview with Charlemagne as he stood on a hillside gazing down through the evening air at his massacred army in the vale of Roncevaux? Heroism and legend require that one does not approach too closely—letters a thousand feet high must be read from a long distance. And if we wish to conquer the world, we must not mind sarcastic comments on our style of dress.

Innocence is being able, if one had been looking forward to a day out in the sunshine, to enjoy the beauty of the rain instead.

Innocence is being able to admire the enthusiasm and fervour of a man with whose opinions one disagrees.

Innocence is like flying a kite—one can abandon oneself to the exhilaration of being buffeted by the wind, knowing that one is firmly tied on to the ground. Without Innocence one would be carried off by the first light breeze. An Innocent soul can dance round the darkest hurricane or talk to the quickest lightning, because its cord is long enough to extract it from difficulty. It is able to take pleasure in the world's kaleidoscope of conflicts without ever mistaking any of it for the truth.

"Here we are faced with another example of the familiar phenomenon whereby the origins of certain unpopular facts can transfer themselves from the distant future to the established past without ever having existed in a present. We used to be told that the E.E.C. was a purely economic arrangement, suggestions of a United States of Europe were mere scaremongering. Now we are told that we are irretrievably committed to a federal Europe. When, exactly, was the decision taken?" J. ALAN SMITH

Correspondence

To Thee or not to Thee

MADAM, Thank you for the new issue of *The English Magazine* which I received with pleasure—a feast of sanity amidst an ocean of idiosyncy. However there was one distressing note, coming in the otherwise absorbing *Shelmerdine*, which has driven me to write to you "by return of post". I refer to the words of Lydia: "... and I shall but love thee the more; but I beg of thee, do not sell me back." The inappropriateness of this use of the familiar in addressing her mistress I can only ascribe to the loss of the instinct for the proper in southern England. No young person in the North who has retained, even after long subjection to modern influences, a sense of propriety, would ever address an elder or better by the familiar.

The whole question is very subtle and delicate, but certain rules of correct behaviour can be stated:

1. Do not *thou* thy father.
2. Do not *thou* thine elders and betters—the vicar, the doctor, the school-master, the constable, and certainly *never* the master or mistress.
3. Do not *thou* any one in the presence of strangers.
4. Do not *thou* an equal where no relationship, whether of consanguinity, affinity or mutual affection, exists.

A breach of the first rule will result in severe disapproval and, if persisted in, physical chastisement. A breach of the second rule, if persisted in, will earn the offender a reputation for impertinence only to be lived down with difficulty. A breach of the third rule is a social gaffe, whilst a breach of the fourth may be taken as so offensive as to merit nasally sanguine correction.

The familiar is proper only between siblings, cousins to the second or third degree, spouses, of course, and sweethearts. In the latter case, the acceptance or rejection of the first timid use of the familiar determines the continuation or otherwise of the romance. In all other cases, the use of the familiar shows a lack of respect.

In France, the generation of the awful 'sixties made a fatuous point of addressing even the most casual acquaintances as "*tu*". This was supposed to prove equality or informality or something; whereas it merely demonstrated lack of sensibility. To avoid association with this uncouth *ethos*, it is better for the polite form to be used at all times, even in a novel, unless one is possessed of an unerring instinct for the appropriateness of the familiar.

YOURS &c. MR. ANTHONY COONEY

Words about Words

MADAM, You may be interested to know that every issue of your estimable magazine is not only read by my husband, myself and some close friends, but that we meet in conclave to discuss the essays and opinions in detail, sometimes at one of our houses and sometimes at a nearby inn.

Recently, we were discussing Miss Scott-Robinson's essay on the stability of the English language. My husband was much consoled by the suggestion that barbaric usages, prevalent as they may seem, usually die out and do not become permanent. Miss Scott-Robinson said "No one today says *something of that extent* to mean *something of that sort*, or uses *flaunt* for *flout*; though both these errors and many others which have disappeared were common before the last great war."

I must confess that I was doubtful. Of course, abuses have disappeared, but were they not confined to the ignorant, or at any rate, to journalists and second-rate writers? Were they ever used by the educated classes as they are today? I rather doubted it. The rest of our circle trusted in Miss Scott-Robinson's judgement.

Well, the very next day we were listening to an early recording of "The Stately Homes of England", sung, and, of course, written, by Mr. Noël Coward (we bought a gramophone last year as a result of Pippi's piece on them, so you can see how much you influence us) and my husband noticed the following lines:

And though we sometimes flaunt our family conventions,

Our good intentions

Mustn't be misconstrued.

Emphasis ours, as they say. Of course, he must have meant *flout*, so there we have it. One of the very mistakes cited by Miss Scott-Robinson publicly perpetrated and permanently recorded by one of the most literate popular lyricists and dramatists of the time.

I know it is a story against myself, but I do think Romantics should be good-natured about being proved wrong and not stick obstinately to opinions, do not you? And do you think a wife should never disagree with her husband?

YR. OBT. SERV^t. MRS. GEORGE LATHAM

No one should stick obstinately to an opinion unless it is right. As to your last question—you will not succeed in leading Miss Prism into that quagmire! I note that gramophones are becoming more expensive all the time. I do hope we are not responsible.

MADAM, I am an admirer of Miss Scott-Robinson's pithy, incisive pieces on the English language, and have come to regard her occasional longer essays, such as "The Decanter" as being among the finest delicacies of modern letters. "Is English Changing" was no exception, but it brought to the fore a point which has long been nagging me. It is this: Miss Scott-Robinson roundly pooh-poohs the notion that "Standard English" is merely one dialect among others, and in so doing, presumably relegates rustic and regional dialects to an inferior place in the scheme of things. While I do not fall into the easy but erroneous assumption that she is a pedant (which she clearly is not), she does seem (no doubt quite consciously and affectedly) to be the sort of Romantic bluestocking who champions school-mistress's English against the world (hardly surprising, perhaps considering the editorship of *The English Magazine*!). For the most part, in the present corrupt climate, this is a safe and salutary position to take. However, in many respects, the English of the "uneducated" classes has been a fine thing. Mr. J.G. Mackay wrote in 1940 of the Scottish Highlands: "The poorest classes generally speak the language admirably... Some recited thousands of lines of ancient heroic poems... Another cause of the fragmentary character of some tales is the obliterating effect of modern civilisation." Karl Otten has written: "Universal compulsory education, of the type introduced at the end of the last century, has not fulfilled expectations by producing happier and more effective citizens; on the contrary, it has created readers of the yellow press and cinema-goers." Today we should be forced to add "television-watchers". In championing what is primarily a literate language against the oral traditions of the folk, one is apt to forget the distinction drawn by the great Ananda Coomaraswamy (to whom I am indebted for the above quotations) between oral and written culture: "The distinction is largely of poetry from prose and myth from fact. The quality of oral literature is essentially poetical, its content essentially mythical, and its preoccupation with the spiritual adventures of heroes: the quality of originally written literature is essentially prosaic, its content literal, and its preoccupation with secular events and personalities." There is, throughout the world, a vernacular tradition of great depth and beauty which it ill behoves a Romantic or a traditionalist to denigrate. I should be interested to hear Miss Scott-Robinson's comments upon these reflections.

YR. OBT. SERV^t. DR. F.R.H. TRAILL

Miss Scott-Robinson replies: The points you raise are important ones and are well taken. Genuine vernacular culture has been the last repository of many important truths; however it is by no means this culture which the relativisers and modernists are anxious to defend. They are always attempting, by an unerring instinct, to promote the lowest and most degenerate perversions of urban proletarianism, an artificial creation fostered by precisely those cultural deviations which Coomaraswamy was opposing. Certainly where a genuine oral tradition and culture exists, we should be the last to demigrate it.

A final note from Coomaraswamy's master, René Guénon, should be borne in mind on this subject:

"The very conception of folklore, in the generally accepted sense of the term is radically false, the idea that there are 'popular creations' spontaneously produced by the mass of the people; and one sees at once the close connexion between this way of thinking and 'democratic' prejudices. As has been very rightly said, 'the profound interest of all so-called popular traditions lies in the fact that they are not popular in origin.'"

NOTE: The essay referred to by Dr. Traill is "The Bugbear of Literacy" by Ananda Coomaraswamy. It is available in an anthology of Coomaraswamy's writings, also entitled *The Bugbear of Literacy* and available from Perennial Books, Pates Manor, Bedford, Middlesex at £4.19s-11d plus 14/- postage and packing.

That Beastly Swindle

MADAM, In "The Self-Evident Swindle" the incomparable Sparrowhawk makes a statement which, Heaven be thanked, is perhaps a little out of date by now. The statement in question is that "It is taken as axiomatic by almost every one that equality is α) possible and β) desirable . . . any one who should repudiate the dogmas of equality is met not with rational argument but with crass and insulting political jargon."

This was certainly so in the obnoxious 1960s and 1970s, but I think it is less true today, when economic inequality, at any rate, is coming more and more to be accepted as an inevitable fact of life. The high days of equalitarianism are already over,

YR. SERV^t. MR. K. YOUNGER

Sparrowhawk comments: Let us hope that you are right. Nonetheless, the fact remains that assumptions of equality are still de rigueur among obedient natives. Whenever it is shown, for example (as it often is), that white people or members of the superior social classes do better

in all spheres of education, employment and so forth, this is always attributed to "prejudice" or "lack of opportunity" or "environmental factors". I do not think any modern writer or politician would dare to suggest that such differences may be due to innate inequalities, though most people probably privately believe that they are. And what are terms like "racist" and "sexist"—used far more now than they were in the obnoxious 1960s—if they are not crass and insulting political jargon?

MADAM, I fear that in making out Thomas Jefferson to be one of the early proponents of a mindless equality-by-fiat, Sparrowhawk is guilty of an overly literal interpretation of the American Declaration of Independence. Mr. Jefferson did write the unfortunate words "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal. . ." One must nevertheless recall that the declaration lists grievances that the colonials were prepared to redress by force of arms, and that it was addressed to King George III of England. It was meant to justify bloodshed and to explain to a monarch why his American subjects felt themselves free to extinguish their allegiance. Mr. Jefferson's rhetorical excesses must be taken in context.

Today the words are taken to mean equality before the law or equality before god. Nevertheless, I believe that H.L. Mencken captured the spirit of the entire declaration when, in his "burlesque translation into American", he rendered the passage thus: "All we got to say on this proposition is this: first, me and you is as good as anybody else, and maybe a d**n sight better; . . ." These are fighting words, not philosophy.

Those who trace the ancestry of the current saturnalia of egalitarianism back to Thomas Jefferson might also recall that he was a slave-owner. Moreover, once the excitement of tweaking the royal nose had worn off, he wrote a great deal that is carefully ignored today, including the following aphorism: "there is no greater inequity than the equal treatment of unequals."

YR. OB^t. SERV^t. MR. JARED TAYLOR

How refreshing to hear Thomas Jefferson defended on the grounds that he was a slave-owner. Of course, there are those of us who might hold that taking his words in their historical context only makes the matter worse; but that is another question.

2-4-6-8 WE SHALL NEVER METRICATE
INSIST ON IMPERIAL

French Results

Miss Prism confesses that she is a touch disappointed with the response to the 'French Lesson' published in our last issue—but one. You are usually rather good at this sort of thing, but whether it was because Mlle. Geſte had you "Stumped", to employ a sporting metaphor, or whether you were, to use another, merely "resting on your oars", a lesser number of you than usual attempted to exercise your brains on this initially oblique but essentially not too difficult problem. When I tell you that it was tested on Pippit who solved it (with a little collaboration but no informed help) in under two hours, I trust you will all hang your heads in shame. I name no names, Miss Turner, but several of you from whom we expect fuller participation seem to have taken refuge in a pretence of not understanding that it was a puzzle. An expression comes to mind which a lady must hesitate to put into print. Nonetheless it shall be put. *Faugh!*

Having promised the solution for our last issue, we have delayed it until this to give more of you a chance to reply, and we have now had several solutions—all of them fully correct which shows that, like taking a cold swim, it is not so very difficult once you have made the plunge. The first complete solution to arrive was from Mr. Gerard Wankling of Jersey and Cheltenham who says:

"I am writing to let you know how much I enjoyed the 'French Lesson' in the latest issue of *The English Magazine*. So much more interesting than those I remember from my school-days; it kept me amused for several hours.

"After much thought, much delving into my *Golden Treasury* and, I must own, some help, I think that I have 'plumbed the inner meanings' of the verses.

"What an influence the Oise poets seem to have had on English poetry! The verses in question were undoubtedly the inspiration for *Bruce's Address to his Army at Bannockburn* by Robert Burns, *Annabel Lee* by Edgar Allen Poe, *Lord Tennyson's Crossing the Bar* and even one of the Bard's sonnets to his love. As might be expected, one of the poems crossed the Atlantic to become the chorus of the French-Canadian song *Alouette*. There, I think that covers all of them.

Thank you for all the hard work that you do on *The English Magazine*; It is not unappreciated. I eagerly await each issue and read and re-read it until the next one arrives."

How entirely charming, and how entirely right. Now those of you who did not arrive at these conclusions should go back and look once more, remembering (as you were instructed by Mlle. Geſte) to read the verses aloud in your very best French. It may help you, whilst you are doing so, to think of M. Maurice Chevalier's English. Now, turn to page 128 of this series and begin work. One moment. Before you begin, here is a charmingly-turned solution from Mr. C.D. King of St. Andrews:

"The Verses sent by Mlle. A. Geſte, that you have printed in *The English Magazine* are indeed, as you say, very curious. You report Mlle. Geſte as guardedly opining that "next to nothing is known" of the Oise Poets: yet us serious Students [we, Mr. King, we—but proceed] of this fascinating yet elusive Group of *Trouvères* (and it is evident from her sensitive and *savantes* Translations that Mlle. Geſte is to be so denominated) cannot but be aware of the Oise Poets' connexion with the even more obscure—some would say actually non-existent—Northern Branch of the heretical Cathar Society, which, quite unbeknown to conventional Historians, or indeed to anybody else, flourished in and round about (but espeshely in) that River in Days of yore.

"One of the attributes of the Oise Cathars that made them seem heretical even to the Cathars of the South was their ardent Devotion to that mystick Beast, the Golden Gorilla of the Venerable Bede, which I cannot in Conscience allow Mlle. Geſte to consign whoolly to needless Obscurity. The recent Article of Professor Groseille, now sadly unobtainable and indeed never actually written, explains how this wonderfull Animall would go into a Seazure, thus empowering its eagerly lissen-ing Votaries to hear in its brute grunts and jibbers, thoh but in a Glass darkly, as the Book ses, the Song and Storie of Ages yet unborn, the which they remembered and rendered in a form of Code, their halowd religious Notions, whether the noble Beast himself, or the crippled Dwarf without his seven Endyves (here the Student of ther Classics will note a tantalysing compound of Hephaiſtos and Demeter), or some other: these Notions dooing Dewtie for the esoterick Interpretation of the Verses in Accordance with which the Initiate coud, in the case of the Samples retaild by Mlle. Geſte, hear and enjoy (in the first place) *Scots Wha Hae* by Robert Burns; (in the second) *Annabel Lee* by E.A. Poe; (to fulfill the Tryad) *Crossing the Bar* by Lord Tennyson; (to square the Square with a mischevous piece of linguistick Cannibalism) *Alouette*, a tradition-

al French-Canadian Song; and (lastly) Sonnet 18 by William Shakespeare.

"And in Admiration of your excellent Magazine, I remain, dear Lady,

"YR. OBDT. SVT.," [signed] MR. C.D. KING

And that, dear children, is the secret of the Oise Poets—I mean, poets.

SHELMERDINE BY MISS PRISCILLA LANGRIDGE CHAPTER IX

THE ADVENTURE OF THE MISSING MASCOT

To say that Esmeralda's wrath was terrible would really be to spin a yarn. To her the whole thing was little more than a game. The other Greens were much upset and Esmeralda realised that it was something of a setback; but the trembling of her slave-girl was worth more to her than the rather charming Mascot which had to be kept in a locked vault like a miser's hoard because of the silly customs of the school. It was the perfect pose and Lydia acted it perfectly. It was an aspect of her *miroir* which it would have been a pity to leave unexplored.

In her distress, Lydia repaired to Mimsy Crystal. Mimosa Crystal (that really was her name, lucky thing!) was, after Lydia herself, the nearest thing to an "arty" that the First Form could boast. She was vague, bookish, distinctly unsporty and quite whimsical. She was able to join Lydia in her flights of fancy and did not mind (as many of the Form rather did) that she spent so much of her time with members of the Sixth. Mimsy's sense of schoolgirl propriety, like Lydia's, was not highly developed. Had Lydia not spent so much of her time among the æsthetes, she and Mimsy might well have been best friends. As it was, Mimsy admired Lydia from more or less afar; enraptured by her wonderful hair and her wonderful mannerisms; her half-adoption into a higher sphere increasing the air of angelic remoteness and delicacy which always surrounded her.

It was thus something of a rapture for Mimsy Crystal when Lydia came to her for help. That Mimsy was a great reader of Sherlock Holmes was well known, and it was upon this that Lydia based her appeal when Mimsy, having read her cryptically-worded note, met her in a secluded corner of the school grounds.

"Forgive my being so mysterious, Miss Crystal, but I understand that you are a consulting detective."

"I think I may claim some modest success in that sphere of endeavour, Miss l'Ange."

"Then I have a case to lay before you. Perhaps the most mysterious that you have ever encountered," and she proceeded to set before Mimsy the facts, relating to the Adventure of the Missing Mascot.

"You will forgive the suggestion, Miss l'Ange, but is it impossible that you left the door unlocked?"

"Oh, that is what those beastly Sixthers are saying; but I did not—I know I did not. I am always so very careful, and I distinctly remember doing it."

"Does the Emerald Princess believe you?"

"Of course she believes me. She always believes me. But that does not alter the case. She said I was to be whipped if the charioteer was lost, and the charioteer is lost, and I shall be whipped; whipped before the court assembled."

"Well, I don't know what she will do, but she cannot really whip you, you know," said Mimsy reassuringly.

Such reassurance was not welcome. Poor Lydia was genuinely terrified, but she certainly did not want the magic of her drama to be in any way reduced. Of course she must be whipped; the world would lose its brightness if it was all a pretence.

"She will bring my former master to whip me—the chieftan Veronica. She is a prefect, you know. She is allowed to cane junior girls."

"Yes, but they hardly ever do it—"

This was quite the wrong thing to say. The very suggestion that Lydia was not an exception was horrid. In any case, it was not true. There was no doubt that Veronica would happily play her appointed rôle in this drama. Even though she was not a permanent member of the court, she was entered into this aspect of the magic as deeply as any one except Esmeralda and Lydia themselves.

"Oh, you do not understand. She has whipped me on many occasions. Shall I show you the marks?" Lydia put her hand to her shoulder, as if to rend her school blouse, beginning at the same time to sob pitifully.

"No, no, that is unnecessary," said Mimsy much to Lydia's relief, for this part of the story was quite untrue. "Poor child," she said, taking her hands. "You have been cruelly used."

"Oh, I do not mind," said Lydia, in a voice tremulous with tears; "pray do not think that. It is just that I cannot bear the thought

of suffering disgrace and ignominy for something which I did not do. Please say that you will help me."

"My powers, such as they are, are at your service, dear lady."

The project of confining Shelmerdine to Coventry was not a notable success. The way in which the fascinating new Stranger had been monopolised from the beginning by the Inner Circle had always been half-resented in some quarters and once ostracised, Shelmerdine had blatantly wooed and easily won the company of another group of madcaps, led by one Binkie Parr. Her tactics had been a mixture of dash and scorn—the attraction of her swashbuckling *miroir* combined with an implied atmosphere of "I say, you are not really going to take this schoolgirl Coventry business seriously, are you?" Within a few minutes Binkie had accepted a dare from Shelmerdine and was saying to her circle:

"You chaps can do what you like, but I am not cutting a girl for standing up for her friends just because the Fielding family say so. They don't own this Form, even if they think they do."

Quite why Shelmerdine exerted herself to win Binkie over is hard to say. She did not much like the girl, and liked her cronies less. She had rather thought of absconding from the school altogether now that it had become boring; but she wanted to demonstrate to Dot that she could not defeat her; that she could break Coventry and give her talents to a rival company. In this latter she was highly successful, and the dares of the Binkie Set under Shelmerdine's direction outshone the exploits of the now rather dimmed and disconcerted Inner Circle. To some extent it was a blow beneath the belt, for the twins were in such deep disgrace with the school authorities that they were not in a position to exercise the utmost daring. The form was radically split; some staying loyal to the Inner Circle and the Coventry rule and others openly regarding Shelmerdine and Binkie as having supplanted the twins as unofficial leaders of the form.

It would be grossly unfair to say that the Binkie Set were Bad Company—there was very little of that at Granchester—but they were not of the same quality as the twins and Alison. Their standards were not so high and they lacked—it was hard to put one's finger upon it—a certain brightness, a certain subtlety, a certain warmth. It made one realise just how fine, in many respects, the Inner Circle was; for these girls—perfectly accept-

able friends—seemed in comparison just a touch coarse-grained. Shelmerdine felt the difference as a slight hollowness at the centre of things, but she smiled and ignored it; though she noticed how often she found herself looking forward to her Study sessions with Flavia.

"What we need," she said to Binkie one day, "is a really topping dare. One that will set those types by the ears."

"I can think of one," said Binkie, "Only it can't be done."

"Never say that, old humming-top. Why, when I was your age—"

"No, but this one really can't."

"You are only saying that to whet my appetite. What is it?"

"Bagging the Greens' chariot."

"Yes, I see what you mean, no one knows where it is."

"Oh, I know where it is, alright. The problem is getting it."

"How do you know where it is?"

"I know a girl who knows a girl who's seen it. I realise that sounds a bit rumoury, but I am pretty sure my information is correct. It's in a first-form girl's locker. A child called Jane Marston. You must have seen her about: she's that infant with the extraordinary blonde hair she can sit on; the one who moves about as if she were made of porcelain."

"Yes, I've seen her. 'Normously Striking child. But how could a first-former come to have the chariot?"

"Well she's Esmeralda's fag and a sort of pet of the 'arties'."

"How very delicate. I did not realise the Sixth contained such refined taste."

"Refined rot."

"When you are my age, child, you will have more appreciation for the subtler things of life."

"I jolly well won't."

"No, I do not suppose you will, come to think of it. So you want me to lift the chariot?"

"I really don't think it can be done. Those lockers are well built. Each lock is unique and they are pretty much unpickable. I know—I am quite a hand and I've tried it."

"I never pick locks. Is there a master key?"

"I don't think there can be, because Edna Pinkerton lost her key once and the handyman had to break her locker open. It took him a whole morning. They are always rotting on at us not to lose the keys."

"I see. Well it certainly does seem impossible. I could never do it unless I was dared."

"You mean you could do it if you were

dared?"

"Dare me and see."

Detaching Lydia's key and replacing it afterwards was one of the more challenging dips Shelmerdine had undertaken, but it was easily within her power. The dare had been issued at breakfast and by the afternoon break Shelmerdine was able to display the chariot in a secret place known to the Binkie Set.

"I say," said Betty Norton. "We really have pulled something off this time!"

"What will we do with it?" asked Kate Lowell.

"I think we'd better give it to the Blues," said Binkie. "If we keep it it would be rather like stealing, but if we bag it for the Blues it's sport."

"I want to keep it for a few days," said Shelmerdine firmly. "After that, we shall see."

The idea of "bagging it for the Blues" was quite uncontentious among the Binkie set. For one thing, it would make the exploit public and braggable. Mascot-bagging was a school tradition, not a crime. For another thing, the Third was almost solidly Blue. The ideas which animated the Parties in the higher forms were not hotly debated, but it was generally felt that the Blues were more "square" and sporting. Shelmerdine's own loyalties were more divided. When she had first arrived she would have been solidly Green, preferring subtlety and individualism to the "team spirit". At that time she would undoubtedly have miss-read the Greens by an Elizabethan light, but her instinct would have been for them. Later, she vaguely backed the blues, because, well, she thought their attitudes rather fun and considered what she had heard of the Greens a bit drippy. Now she was less sure. Blue bounciness as epitomised by the Binkie Set could become a touch tiring, and the little Binkie had said about Lydia intrigued her. She had often noticed the girl—in fact, Lydia was probably the only first-former Shelmerdine had noticed as an individual—and she had always felt strangely drawn to her; not merely because she was so striking and so interestingly affected, but because, as most sensitive people noticed, there was something very unusual and valuable about her—something magical and of the highest quality: art, animal genius, call it what one might. Like Oscar Wilde, she put her genius into her life, and it showed even at that tender age. That Esmeralda had adopted her as a "pet"—and had induced her whole set to do likewise—in-

creased her respect for Esmeralda. Here, surely, was something delicate and subtle, and she had felt half-ashamed from the beginning of intruding upon such hallowed ground with a bouncy Blue rag. She was somewhat inclined to return the charioteer quietly, by the same means that she had taken it; but then came temptation in the form of the notice.

The notice appeared on the School notice-board. It read:

DEAR CHAPS,

What clever fellows you are. One cannot leave a door unlocked for an hour without your getting in. Would you care to go for double or quits? I am the keeper of the spear-thrower and am authorised to hazard her upon the draw of a card. If you dare, pray approach:

MIMSY CRYSTAL

"And who is Mimsy Crystal?" asked Shelmerdine.

"Another first-former—cheeky Chinaman. But it's a trap, of course."

"I don't see why 'of course'."

"It's like the Silver Arrow, don't you see? They know Robin Hood will not be able to resist the challenge, and when he comes, they nab him. The first-former is just a front—even if she is the keeper of the spear-thrower, all the Green Sixthers will be lying in ambush."

"Nonsense, they're gentlemen."

"The Greens have all sorts of funny ideas. They aren't sportsmen: besides the same rules don't apply in the Mascot War. Chaps do things which would be called stealing or cheating if they were done for other reasons."

"But just think what a coup it would be to have both Mascots."

"Take my advice, Shelmerdine, old pogostick; steer clear."

"Robin Hood didn't."

The idea of getting both Mascots appealed greatly to Shelmerdine. Both Mascots! Anything the Fieldings did would look pale after that! She was, however, well aware of the likelihood of a trap, and had no intention of complying with the instructions on the notice. Not, at any rate, until she had tried something else. The wording of the notice implied that the Greens thought the locker had been left open. Very natural. How else could it have been done? In that case, there was a chance that the spear-thrower might be in Mimsy Crystal's locker. It was a simple matter to lift Mimsy's key. It was merely in an inside pocket. Shelmerdine was extremely careful about opening the locker. It was just possible that

her opponents were subtler than they seemed and that it was watched; but no, ten minutes observation was enough to be certain that here was no watch. She opened the locker and, sure enough, there was the spear-thrower, resplendent in mellow, greenish bronze, just waiting to be bagged. Somehow, she felt extra-cautious about this show, and rather than walk off with the thing in her possession, she simply transferred it to her own locker and locked it up. Her heart was beating rapidly. The whole thing had had the feel of a trap. Still, she had certainly not been observed, no one could look into her locker and she need not retrieve the Statue for a week or more if she chose not to.

As few moments after she had reached the third-form common room, the bomb dropped. Veronica Carlisle entered, accompanied by Mimsy Crystal.

"Nobody move," said Veronica with quiet drama. Nobody did. "A few minutes ago, some one took a Statuette from Mimosa's locker. That statue was coated with an indelible green dye. The Form will line up along that wall and present their hands."

"No need for that," said Shelmerdine quietly. "It's a fair cop."

"Show me your hands."

Shelmerdine turned out her green-blotched palms. "I arrest you in the name of the Emerald Princess. Follow me."

"Rum go," whispered Binkie.

"Emerald Princess!" whispered Kate. "What do you think they're up to?"

Shelmerdine was conducted into the Green Common Room; the traditional counsel chamber of the Greens. Esmeralda sat enthroned upon an armchair. Lydia l'Ange knelt at her feet like an angelic porcelain statue surrounded with golden hair. A tall sixth-former stood at either side, like a guard of honour. They should have had robes, of course, and knew they should, but they carried it off very well in the dove-grey school uniform ("How merciful that it is not navy," as Esmeralda had often said) and found that it even added a certain piquancy of its own.

"Kneel before the princess," commanded Veronica. Shelmerdine obeyed.

Esmeralda looked at Shelmerdine for some minutes before she spoke. "Interesting child," she said at length, and then, as if it were a tedious duty of State, to which she was long accustomed: "You are charged with abducting royal treasures from their places of safe-keeping. How do you plead?"

"Guilty, your Highness," said Shelmerdine. This went well with the court. She had

entered the magic.

"Do you realise that my slave here was nearly whipped for your misdemeanours?"

"Then I confess myself glad to have been apprehended, your Highness."

"A noble spirit. Pray tell the court, how did you effect your crimes?"

"By sorcery, your Highness."

"By sorcery?"

"Yes, your Highness. I have a power over locks and all manner of bonds."

"Would you care to demonstrate this power?"

"I fear that is impossible, your Highness. You see, my sorceries work only when I am free. Apprehend me, imprison me and all my strength is gone."

"Do I detect some subtle ploy wherewith you would gain your freedom? Alas, it is not to be. I shall listen no longer to your artful words. You shall be whipped. Lydia."

Upon this mention of her name, Lydia rose with unspeakable grace and walked, marionettish, to a table covered by a violet cloth. She lifted the cloth and beneath it lay a school cane, long and slender, Shelmerdine, from her kneeling position, did not see it until Lydia lifted it in her hands. She had never seen one before; it seemed an almost mythical thing. Lydia bore it to Veronica, knelt before her and offered it up to her. Shelmerdine felt a tightness in her chest and a tingling over her forehead—and yet everything Lydia did was so beautiful. Esmeralda had brought out her genius consummately. Veronica smiled. Two sixth-formers assisted Shelmerdine to her feet and led her to the table. She remembered briefly that she was really the same age as they, perhaps older. It seemed a whimsical thought. They bent her down, her body flat on the table, her feet on the ground. Her tight skirt stretched taut. Veronica flexed the long cane in her hands. She had wanted to do this for a long time.

"Six Strokes," said the Princess. The first stroke hurt more than anything Shelmerdine could remember. Veronica laid them on slowly and skilfully, with the force of real intention. At the last one Shelmerdine had to use all her will not to cry out. She was raised to the standing position and brought before the Princess, her face unnaturally flushed. The Princess smiled sweetly.

"A most charming ceremony," she said.

"It was a charming ceremony, was it not?" said Lydia l'Ange.

"Were you not sorry for her?" asked Mim-

my Crystal.

"Oh, no. Not at all. I loved it. I can be quite cruel, you know. But I still cannot understand how you did it."

"It was a risk, really, and quite a bit of guesswork, but the Princess agreed to take the risk. It was clear that some one had an unnaturally clever way with locks or some such thing, and from certain rumours—one about the Hope-Carrington Cup in particular—I rather suspected that that some one was in the Third. Quite how she worked I could not tell—and still cannot—but the only way to catch her was to lay a trap; one which was in almost every respect perfectly genuine. Had the culprit accepted the gamble, we should have played it honestly; the Emerald Princess would have it no other way. The spear-thrower was given into my keeping and everything was done just as it should have been. You see, we had no idea of the powers of this mistress-thief except that they were exceptional. Any hint of a trap might have been fatal. So every aspect of the game was entirely pukka—except, of course, the green dye, which was just a precaution in case our mistress-thief should not be entirely honest, as mistress-theives, I believe, occasionally are not. The locker was watched at crowded times of course, but not at other times, for fear of frightening our bird away—but we had several keys made for the locker—which cannot be reached without passing the Green common room, and a Green Sixther contrived to check it as soon as the coast was clear every time any one passed down the corridor. As soon as it was found missing there was a raid on the Third."

"And the indelible green dye—where on earth did you get that?"

"Oh, that was my own touch of drama—you must permit me my own touch of drama. It was green chalk-dust really."

"Your own touch of drama! I should say so! Why, the theatre lost a master-spirit when you decided to devote your talents to criminology."

"My blushes, dear lady, my blushes."

Helpful Hints

Better or Spirit?

WHEN translating such half-witted absurdities as "£4.99" into English, the proper course is to translate the *spirit* of the thing rather than the *letter*. After all, the merchant is really trying, in his artless and unenlightened way, to charge you £4.19s.11d. That is how you must translate it. Or if you prefer, you may say to

your friend:—"It cost five pounds nineteen and elevenpence ha'penny" or "nine pounds nineteen and elevenpence three-farthings". Similarly, of course "99p" is 9/11d or 9/11½d.

Book Review

True & False Bohemians

Miss Lucinda Traill supplies the key
to *The Constant Nymph*

THE Constant Nymph by Miss Margaret Kennedy is what might be called a current book from the Romantic point of view. That is to say, you can buy it in bookshops every where. There is probably not a town in Britain where you cannot pick up a copy at prices ranging from a few shillings to a pound or so. I am, of course, speaking of the sort of bookshop you and I frequent—second hand bookshops, which are the only sort a decent person can enter these days without being violently ill.

From its easy availability, it is clear that the book once enjoyed a very considerable vogue. It was first published in 1924, and took the nation, as they say, by storm. Nearly every one read it, and it was made into a stage play with Mr. Noël Coward in the leading role as Lewis Dodd—who might perhaps be described as one of the earliest "anti-heroes" in British fiction.

Do I alarm you? Do I hear you ask: "is this book sound?" Of course I do; for that is the sort of question one must ask about a current book which one sees everywhere. Ought we to be reading it or treating it with the same Olympian contempt with which we regard the wares of those other shops where the books have repulsive silly-clever jackets and the assistants, as often as not, have no jackets at all?

I should begin by telling you that this book has a certain notoriety. It is said, by its lyrical beauty, to have wooed large numbers of the British middle class to the view that illicit love—at least among Bohemians—is a charming, and even perhaps an acceptable, thing. We do not consider that this was any part of the authoress's intention. The British (and American) middle class has always had an intuition that it must be rigorously guarded from anything which was not utterly correct and conventional; from anything into which the existence of immorality intruded as anything but a cautionary picture in a very overt moral fable, else they might be corrupted utterly and the civilised decencies of ten generations evaporate overnight;—and any one who is remotely

familiar with the deplorable social history of the late 20th century will be aware that this intuition, absurd as it may have seemed, was absolutely correct. Miss Kennedy, adding her stone to the early stages of the avalanche, may have known that; but there is no reason to suppose that she did.

Mr. G.K. Chesterton, one of the staunchest defenders of decency between the wars, said on more than one occasion that a book which treats of immoral themes is not necessarily an immoral book. It may, as in the case of *Vanity Fair* be a highly moral book. *The Constant Nymph* is not, I think, that, but it is certainly not a simple case of recommending immorality. The essential conflict of the book is between Bohemianism and "convention". Up to a point the former may be identified with immorality or amorality and the latter with morality, but really the book is rather subtler than that.

Reading the book from a post-1960s point of view, it is easy to misunderstand it in the light of later and grosser ideas; for it is important to note that modern propaganda has, in many ways, distorted the perspective even of those who have rejected it; and learning to read older books in an un-modernised way is one of the best exercises for recovering a more normal perspective.

The book, then, opens in a *ménage* which will be familiar to those who have suffered the 1960s—the household of Albert Sanger or "Sanger's Circus", as it is more familiarly known, has much in common with the "commune" (pron. *commyeen*) of a later and lower age. Bad manners, bad language and alley-cat morality are the rules. The girls share a common wardrobe of crumpled, dirty clothes lying in heaps on the floor of their common bedroom. We do not actually hear the bad language at any point, which makes the book readable and allows the *ménage* to retain a certain charm. Is this hypocrisy? The "whitewashing" of the unjustifiable? We think not. Only the shallowest and most inattentive (or pre-conditioned) reader can imagine that this is being seriously recommended as a pleasant way of life. We are told how each of Sanger's previous wives has died in poverty and neglect, and the Circus breaks up at the end of the first book when Sanger himself dies alone and unattended in his room. Alone and unattended because his present common-law wife, the slutish Linda Cowlard, has been closeted for days with one of his guests and his children are so afraid of his violent and uncontrolled temper that they dare not enter his room even though they suspect that something is wrong.

No intelligent reader can imagine that the authoress is peddling such sophomoric '60s-ish (and '20s-ish) nostrums as "If only we could get away from the Artificial Constraints of Society and live according to our Creative Emotions and free Love. . ." We are shown exactly what life is like when we try to live like that.

The nymphs of the book—Sanger's daughters—have, it is true, a curious charm, half feral, half artistic, as a direct result of having been reared away from the influences of conventional civilisation; yet they, more than any, are painfully, half-consciously, aware of the value of what they have not. The contrast in attitude between Antonia, one of the nymphs, and Florence, a well-bred girl temporarily infatuated with Bohemianism, is both touching and instructive:

[Antonia] was convinced, though she could not put it into words, that no sort of love ought to be despised, since, despite its rude beginnings, it is the first source of civility. But then civility was, to Florence, a commonplace; while to Antonia it was a thing rare and admired, so beautiful as to cast a radiance over its own base and humble origins. Only she could not explain herself.

This is not, of course, to say that there is no positive value in the Bohemian revolt against "convention". At its best it is a revolt of art against philistinism, of beauty against banality; but in order fully to appreciate this it is necessary to set aside the preconceived ideas of late 20th-century pseudo-Bohemianism. The real Bohemian is very far removed from the flabby *poseur* of the 1960s with his drivelling, journalistically-originated maunderings about peace, love, equality and "creativity". The real Bohemian is, before all else, an artist, and if, in some respects Sanger's Circus may resemble a "commyeen", the first radical difference is that nearly all its habitués are subject to a genuine and extremely rigorous artistic discipline. It is also important to free one's mind from the sanctimonious late-20th-century-liberal re-interpretation to which any "rebellious" movement of the past is subject. The late 20th century has been anxious to co-opt all such movements into the great stream of "progressive radicalism", which, swelled by hundreds of imaginary tributaries, has been artificially expanded into one of the major currents of recent Western history. The truth of the matter, as is becoming more widely recognised, is that the anti-bourgeois reaction of the 19th and early 20th centuries was, in most cases, very far from being an egalitarian, leftist rebellion, but was largely an élitist revolt

against democracy. The bourgeois is pre-eminently the democratic type of man, and the contempt felt for him was, until the final triumph of mass propaganda over independent thought, largely the contempt of the "higher man" for the drabness of a civilisation governed by the petty prudencies and providencies of the "inferior man".

We must beware at all times of reading a book like this in the light of the liberal clichés through which the past is now habitually filtered. When, for example, two of the nymphs are sent to an English girls' school and rebel against it, their reasons for doing so have nothing in common with the Stock leftish dislike of discipline and hard work:

They had, it seemed, gone there with every intention to be good, prepared for inhumanly strict teachers and a great deal of hard work. They were really anxious to be educated and might have done well if the place had not been utterly beyond the scope of their imagination.

If it was not discipline or hard work or even severity which was beyond the comprehension of these young Bohemians, then what was it? In a word, it was democracy:

They would have suffered at any school; but at Cleve, which was admittedly democratic, their personal habits and their ready mendacity made them the butt of every amateur reformer. The business of baiting them had a moral sanction behind it. They were persecuted for their own good and the honour of the school until they scarcely knew if they could call their souls their own. They could discover no smallest loophole of respite or escape; in class, at games, at bed and board, the tyrannical, many-eyed mob were always with them.

The easy, obvious, exterior things about Bohemianism—its apparent casualness, its naturalness, its (sometimes) charming disregard for common order—these are things which attract the dilettante like Florence, just as these are the things aped by the modern pseudo-Bohemian. But these things alone are nothing. They are merely symptoms of an inner state, and the dilettante becomes alarmed as she sees the fierce hatred of the democratic mentality, and the fierce, seemingly fanatical, dedication to art. In the following interchange, Florence begins to see some of the underlying fire of Bohemianism:

"What is the Guild of Beauty?" he asked unpromisingly.

"Those people who give those concerts down in the slums. You must know! They have quite a good choir; and they practically run the 'Nine Muses'. Their idea is to educate the popular taste in the Arts, beginning with the proletariat; that's such a much more promising field than the middle

classes. They try to give the people really good music. That concert we went to at Notting Hill Gate was got up by them."

"Call that really good music?"

"N-no. . . It was a good level for amateurs, and—"

"Amateurs," said Lewis, pronouncing the word as if it made him a little ill, "have no business to have a level. Is this Leyburn an amateur?"

"Don't talk in that tone of voice about amateurs. I'm one myself. Yes, he is. He sings very nicely too. And he's done a lot of splendid work bringing music to the people."

"What's he want to do that for?"

"My dear Lewis! Why do you write music?"

"God knows!"

"Don't you want to give pleasure to people?"

"No."

"That's a pose."

"It's not! I'll swear it's not. I tell you this, Florence. The sight of a lot of them listening to my work, or Sanger's work, or anything decent, makes me sick. I swear then I won't write another note, if that's what it's for. Sanger too! I know how he felt. Once I remember they made a demonstration round the door of a hall when he came out, shaking hands with him and so forth, and an old fellow came up and said: 'Mr. Sanger, I'd like to tell you of the pleasure that you've given to a poor working man.' 'Oh?' said Sanger. 'I suppose you think I ought to want to please every son of a b—— who can pay for a sixpenny ticket.'"

The rancour against amateurs has not, it need hardly be said, anything in common with the current Americanised cult of "professionalism". On the contrary, Dodd has nothing but contempt for the concept of a "career", and refuses to advance his own by the slightest real or imaginary compromise with his principles or sensitivities. The Bohemians regard successful career-musicians, who sell their work for the admiration of the many, with utter contempt, as the authoress comments after one conversation:

Thus they dismissed a man who was still the most renowned of British composers. In their circles, however, Lucius Simon was hardly considered worth a malediction.

Both the amateur and the "professional" are despised, because neither is a member of the soul-dedicated elite for whom, art, art alone, art with no ulterior aim, is the purpose of life. If their hatred of the "establishment" is in some respects reminiscent of shallow hippie-ism (the authoress even wryly comments on this dismissal of Lucius Simon "perhaps he was the wrong age"), it must be understood that their revolt, even if in many respects misconceived, is a real revolt, not a flabby acquiescence in the weary journalistic

clichés of off-the-peg "radicalism". The sickly, ersatz, self-abasing cult of the proletariat ("such a much more promising field than the middle classes"), is precisely the sort of thing which makes the Bohemian despise the bourgeoisie—not (as with the tamed pseudo-Bohemian of a later age) because it is "patronising", but because it is bilge; and also because the real Bohemian has no interest or belief in society, high or low, and disdains all such things as schemes for social reform. A socialist millionaire, especially when socialism is the current instrument of power, is a logical development, but a socialist or a democratic Bohemian is a contradiction in terms (this alone is sufficient to expose the falsehood of the "hippie" movement, a toy rebellion which never possessed a single idea which was not originally pumped into its members by the "establishment" broadcasting networks and orthodox-radical schoolteachers). Not being besotted with "the social" or with the prefabricated preoccupations of mass-society and the mass-media, the real Bohemian does not for a moment consider recommending his way of life to others as an "alternative" to conventional social mores. On the contrary, Bohemian society is, in its way, as exclusive as aristocratic society. It is, in its own terms an aristocracy. It is certainly what the tamed pseudo-Bohemian would call an "élite", and no real Bohemian could even conceive of apologising for the fact, and certainly not of using the word as a term of automatic derogation. For the real Bohemian art is the highest value and genius the highest qualification; and after genius, absolute dedication—a dedication that the dilettante cannot understand, as Florence finds to her cost:

they made no comment, but their contemptuous surprise was galling to her. It was impossible always to remember how seriously they took themselves. Her own standards were high, but they were perfect maniacs. It was one of the thousand occasions upon which she was made to feel that four people in the house were united in a point of view which was, to her, partially incomprehensible.

There is nothing bogus about this dedication. Unlike the "hippie" whose passions for "free love", "social justice" or whatever are essentially excuses for physical self-indulgence and the mental laziness of the brainwash-ee, the unconventionality, self-indulgence, and even unpleasantness of the Bohemian turn about the axis of a genuine dedication to art and a real belief that nothing else matters.

This is far from being a piece of flabby self-justification: it is a dedication all too real and even, to the uninitiated, frightening, as Florence realises upon the occasion when she hears Dodd playing the piano part in the Kreuzer Sonata among a group of Bohemian friends:

He certainly knew the piece. There was a peculiar passion and sadness in it which plucked at her very heart strings, as though she herself was an instrument for his cruel, clever fingers. And he gave her besides a conviction of restrained power; she felt that he had mastered all emotion and turned it to his own ends. It was outrageous that he could do it. She knew him to be hard, lustful and unstable; he had no business to command such effortless beauty. Playing like this required noble thoughts and unflinching aims. But then this was his real life. And it was so with all of them. She watched as they listened; even old Rachel, gross and ugly as she was, had a strange light on her face as she leant against the door, smiling and watching the violinist. Teresa and Sebastian were fixed and intent. Jacob had forgotten wife and child, had turned away from them and was staring through the room, all dim with smoke, as though he could see some lost vision beyond the window, among the dark trees of the garden. And Tony, though she pressed her baby in her arms, had wandered in her mind elsewhere. Her lovely eyes had an inward, brooding look. Music, with all these people, came first; that was why they talked as if nobody else had any right to it. Once Florence had liked them all too well; now that she understood them better she was frightened of them. She wanted to challenge them, to make a demonstration of her power, to call them back to that world of necessity and compromise which they so sublimely ignored, but with which they would have ultimately to reckon. After all, she was the strongest. She had order and power on her side. They were nothing but a pack of rebels.

Here is an important point. In the '20s there was still a genuine opposition between the Bohemian and "conventional" worlds; there really was order and power ranged on one side and actual rebellion on the other. In the world of the '60s this opposition, while still maintained in fantasy, was—and is—no longer there. On the one hand a watered-down and meaningless version of Bohemianism is everywhere accepted as "respectable"; the unshaven, foul-mouthed pseudo-rebellious "rock" singer is greeted by presidents and honoured by royalty. The so-called "fringe" at the Edinburgh festival is as much a part of the festival as the rest. The patronage of Arts Councils and similar bodies is reserved exclusively for the "radical" pseudo-Bohemian. "Alternative" comedians share air-time with

"conventional" comedians—provided, of course, they do not break the *real* tabus on race, equality, or other subjects; which, of course, they would never dream of doing. For the other side of the equation is that the modern Bohemian or "alternative" world has been fully and completely co-opted into the liberal-bourgeois establishment. It shares every liberal-leftist-egalitarian notion, merely pushing them all a stage or two further: which is precisely its assigned and accepted function in the scheme of things. The arrogance of the "anti-sexist" "alternative" playwright derives not from a conviction of genius or dedication or intellectual superiority or artistic purity, but precisely from the certainty that "he has power and authority on his side".

For the true Bohemian, the very concept of an "anti-sexist playwright" would be beneath contempt. He despises the notion of art as "socially useful" or useful in any other way. Above all he despises the utilitarian and liberal preoccupations of the middle class, which the modern pseudo-Bohemian has imbibed so thoroughly that he can conceive of nothing else. The two attitudes are thrown into stark contrast in the following dialogue between Dodd and Florence:

"Your attitude is completely wrong. You put the wrong things first. Music, all art . . . what is it for? What is its justification? After all . . ."

"It's not for anything. It has no justification. It . . ."

"It's only part of the supreme art, the business of living beautifully. You can't put it on a pedestal above decency and humanity and civilisation, as your precious Sanger seems to have done. Human life is more important."

"I know. You want to use it like electric light. You buy a new saucepan for your kitchen and a new picture for your silver sty. I've seen it. My father's cultured. He . . ."

"It's a much abused word and one is shy of using it. But it means an important thing, which we can't do without."

"Can't we? I can! By God I can! Why do you suppose I ran away? To get free of it. Why do you think I loved Sanger?" He broke into a wild tirade against those who would chain him and his labour to the wheels of a social structure. He tried to urge his own conviction that beauty and danger are inseparable; that ideas are best conceived in a world of violence; that any civilisation must of necessity end by quenching the riotous flame of art for the sake of civic order. But he could not say what he meant. He was not furnished with any of the right words for such a discussion, and he used, moreover, so many inexcusably wrong ones that she lost the thread in her indignation.

"I can't stand this obscene language any more," she said, jumping up. "And I'm sure the world

would be an unspeakably awful place if you could have your way in it."

"If you had yours the only people who could enjoy themselves would be sick persons and young children."

The Bohemian looks upon the democratic world and sees it as a world ordained for the weak and the stupid; a world unfit for the élite. That is the primary reason for his rebellion. As we see the two points of view counterpoised, we see that they are in real opposition; so much so as scarcely to be capable of comprehending one another. We see also that there is right on both sides. This stands in contradistinction to the modern world, in which the pale parodies of "Bohemianism" and "conventionalism" are able only too well to understand one another, both being based upon the same system of flaccid falsehoods.

Essentially, the problem of the artist derives from the nature of an untraditional society, in which art is increasingly seen as "mere decoration". In traditional societies, such as pre-industrial India or Japan, or mediæval Europe, art was seen as a sacred function; music was the attempt to translate for human ears the "unheard music" of the spheres; painting was the depiction not of "things as they are", which, as Plato said, would be to make "a copy of a copy", but of the celestial archetypes which lie behind manifest things. It is the intuition of this which leaves the artist frustrated and furious in the face of the democratic-rationalist trivialisation of art. Traditional art has its place in society, but it is a sacred place within a society that has not itself become de-sacralised. "Art for art's sake" has always been somewhat absurd as a doctrine, but it is a natural, if untutored, reaction to the reduction of art to a commodity, made for sale on the market-place or for distribution to the masses by the welfare State. The complete loss of the traditional doctrine of art took place over several centuries, culminating in the latter 19th and early 20th; and no real resolution between the "Bohemian" and "civilised" viewpoints can be reached without, on the one hand, a restoration of the traditional doctrine of art, and, on the other, a more traditional view of society as a whole, which can allow it to discharge the functions of serving every section of the community without degenerating into democratic utilitarianism. How this might be done under modern conditions would take us far beyond the scope of this essay, and is, indeed, the principal problem of our times; the return from a fragmented to an

organic social order. Without such a restitution we are condemned either to fruitless oppositions between partial visions, or worse, to a false restitution, based upon the inferior aspect of each point of view. It is the latter which holds sway today. It is significant that the characters in this book, holding as they do, opinions which are but fragments of the jigsaw puzzle, are continually unable to express themselves properly or to understand one another or make themselves understood. In the passages cited in this essay, we note that Antonia, moved by deep feelings on the nature of love and civility "could not explain herself"; that the girls found their English school "utterly beyond the scope of their imagination"; that Florence finds the Bohemians' perfectionism "partially incomprehensible, that Dodd, trying to explain his deepest feelings on art and society, "could not say what he meant". Between the two worlds is a barrier. In a traditional society, they are parts of an organic whole, but in the modern, democratic world, the key has been lost.

Before closing, we must return to the question which was posed implicitly at the beginning of this discourse. Is *The Constant Nymph* an immoral book? Does it condone or glorify illicit love? We should say: No. It is, before all else, a tragedy. The doomed marriage is one which began in misunderstanding; the misunderstanding between a Bohemian husband and a dilettante wife, who can say:

"I want this house to look like us . . . pleasantly Bohemian . . . a sort of civilised Sanger's circus, don't you know, with all its charm and not quite so much . . . disorder."

Such misunderstanding is one of the central themes of the book, and that it leads to a disastrous marriage is natural, and that the husband should behave immorally is only in character. The elopement with a child is in many ways charming and wistful (although Dodd continues to behave boorishly almost to the end) even though it ends tragically; but to imagine that the authoress is for a moment suggesting that this is how people *ought* to behave is entirely to misread the book. In this connexion it is also interesting to note that even the girl brought up in an atmosphere of absolute moral licence and with no understanding of conventional mores, behaves with more decency, self-discipline and instinctive morality than many well-brought-up late-20th-century girls would think of doing.

In any case, the pseudo-Bohemianism of Florence is a subtler thread than a superficial reading might indicate. It is ironic, but not at

all surprising that the wife who wants "a civilised Sanger's circus, without the disorder" rapidly finds herself succumbing to the very reverse. The disorder encroaches upon her personality, while her understanding of the true dedication which underlay that disorder remains as blank as ever:

[Roberto, the servant from Sanger's circus] stole out and stumbled over something on the floor; it was the new dress, flung down as not even a petticoat should have been flung. Roberto, lately converted to neatness, was shocked. He picked up the gown and spread it over a chair; next he rescued a silk shift. Then, realising that the unaccountable disorder which had overtaken the room was something significant and past his mending, he smiled broadly and slid out on tiptoe . . . Nor was his peace of mind shattered when, a week later, he was aware of a dispute, a quarrel so formidable that the house literally rang with it . . . To Florence, however, this quarrel was another step in the slow process of defeat. It was devastating to her, this sudden discovery that her temper could be ungovernable.

And later:

The fight became unbelievably fierce, until Florence noticed an inflection in her voice which reminded her of the railings of Linda Cowlard. She fell silent, horrified and ashamed, and Lewis got in the last word.

It is significant that Florence should begin to bear some slight resemblance to Linda Cowlard, the one member of Sanger's circus who was not a genuine Bohemian, but merely an ordinary slut, tolerated only for her physical attributes. There is a kinship between them. Both are attracted by the exterior of Bohemianism; its freedom and unconventionality, with little understanding of the fierce, beating heart within it, without which it would be nothing—or rather, would be mere "hippie"-ism. The degeneration which takes place in Florence is very similar to the degeneration of a middle-class "hippie"; the decay of standards, physical and moral, the undermining of character by a false conception of "freedom from convention" which has no serious purpose or dedication behind it. Of course, the analogy can be pressed too far. Florence does not consciously accede to this degeneration as the "hippie" does, and her decay is only partial. She continues, in most outward respects to remain the perfect English lady, so much admired by the Bohemian nymphs. Nonetheless, the degenerative effects of this "spineless Bohemianism" are the final cause of the book's whole tragedy. It is only when Florence loses control of herself, unleashes a Linda-Cowlard-like tirade upon the innocent nymph, and ends by using a foul word of the sort that

she has always so hated in Lewis, that the final crisis is precipitated.

Tomorrow she would probably blush to think that she could have screamed such a word out through the house, but filthy language was the only sort of speech which the Sangers understood.

But Florence has no idea how deeply she has shocked and terrified a girl who has heard such language all her life;—how to hear such filth from a lady has shattered all her confidence in the world:

Teresa was, indeed, nearly shocked to death. Her fear was like a nightmare, she did not know where to turn or how to protect herself from this horrible woman who looked like an angel and talked like a devil. Uncle Charles might prate about the merit of civilised life, but there was no safety in it. If Florence, who had seemed so beautiful and good, was really like this, there was no safety in it.

Florence, thus reduced, might almost be taken as a paradigm of the late-20th-century world which is so much the product of people

of her sort—decent, middle-class people ruined and distorted by an ignorant, unprincipled dalliance with rebellion; a rebellion which has no real basis other than a selfish attachment to self-gratification, and which imagines that one can attack the very bases of civilisation with no serious consequences. The result, of course, is an ugly, uncontrolled, priggish insanity; a distorted caricature in which the worst elements of convention are married to the worst elements of Bohemianism, precisely because one is divorced from the true principles of both. That is the ultimate tragedy of the book, as it is the ultimate tragedy of Western civilisation.

The Constant Nymph is remembered, or half-remembered, if at all, as a sentimental story which enjoyed a brief vogue in the '20s. It is far more than that. It is an intelligent, witty, lyrical book which, read with an eye freed from the prejudices of the post-1960s world, forms a splendid exercise in cleansing and deepening the mind and the emotions.

Entertaining

How to Prepare A Dainty Tea

EVERY girl at one time or another wants to give a tea-party, and she is anxious, naturally, to make that tea-party a success. But it is not every girl who knows how to entertain her friends even in this simple way. How should we set about it?

Let us arrange our little menu something after this fashion: green butter sandwiches, egg and anchovy sandwiches, one large cake, small chocolate cakes, almond jumbles, brown bread and butter and white bread and butter.

To make the green butter sandwiches, we pick the leaves from the stems of some fresh watercress, then, after being dried in a clean cloth, they must be chopped small. Now we take 1 oz. of butter, and with a knife mix the two well together and add a small pinch of cayenne pepper to improve the flavour.

This green butter should not be made until the day on which it is to be used, and the sandwiches are greatly improved if some sardines are skinned, boned and mixed up with it. The mixture is spread on bread and made into neat sandwiches, carefully cut into uniform size and shape.

To make the egg and anchovy sandwiches, we take two, three or four eggs, according to the quantity required, and boil them hard. If

placed in a vessel of cold water, they generally peel more easily than if the peeling is attempted at once. The yolks are separated from the whites, put into a basin and well mashed with a fork, and a little anchovy paste added to them and well mixed.

The sandwiches may be garnished with cress or parsley, and both sandwiches and mixture should be made on the day of the tea and should be covered until they are to be used.

We must now turn our attention to the cakes. Delicious little chocolate cakes may be made by mixing 4 oz. flour, 4 oz. sugar, 4 oz. butter, a teaspoonful of baking powder and two eggs. We put all the ingredients together, beating the eggs separately and adding them last. Once mixed well, we place them in a well-greased baking tin. They will require a quarter of an hour to twenty minutes in a hot oven. When quite cold, cut into strips and divide to half the thickness; spread a thick layer of chocolate mixture on one half and place the other half on it very neatly and carefully.

The chocolate mixture is made by melting bars of chocolate in a little hot water to the consistency of very thick cream.

The receipt for almond jumbles may be found on page 140 of this series, and if there is not a favourite and long-tried receipt for a large cake in your house, we shall be presenting one in the near future.

It need scarcely be added that everything must be arranged as daintily as possible.